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GRAYSLAKE — U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park) announced a \$248,000 grant to launch a new reading initiative to help Latino parents who cannot read English, learn the language so they can help their children with homework and other life skills. The classes will start in the fall.

The new 'Families Involved in Reading Stories Together (FIRST)' program will be administered by the College of Lake County and its partners the Adult Learning Connection, Waukegan Public Library, and Literacy Volunteers of Lake County.

"Many of our Latino boys and girls have English language homework that their parents can't read," said Kirk. "To help children be more successful in school, it is very important that parents be able to participate in their education."

The FIRST program curriculum consists of five components: adult education, child education, parenting, library education, and parent and child activities. Parent and Child Together activities. The goal of the program is to increase the English language skills of parents and to strengthen the education bond between parents and their children. Parents are taught to read, write and speak English, and use computers, libraries and other community services. Children are encouraged to speak English.

"We hope the FIRST program will provide every Spanish-speaking, young mother and father with the opportunity to learn English before their child is old enough for homework," said Kirk. "Helping parents help their children with homework will build strong families and send better prepared students to school."

The innovative FIRST program was developed by Congressman Kirk's Latino Advisory Board.

The program was designed to supplement CLC's English as a Second Language Program Initiative for Lake County. Parents can enroll in the program by calling 847-543-2021 for more

information.